

**Metro Nashville Arts Commission
Edmondson Park Public Art Project**

2013-2014

Project Overview

The Metro Nashville Arts Commission has commissioned two internationally-known artists, Thornton Dial and Lonnie Holley, to create site-specific public artworks for [Edmondson Park](#). Located between 16th and 17th Avenue and bordering Charlotte Ave., the park is being revitalized by the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA). The park is named after William Edmondson, a Nashville sculptor, and the first African American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937.

Metro Arts has been awarded a \$25,000 Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the project. Additional monies for the public art will be committed from the Metro Nashville Percent for Art Fund. Overall park construction is led by MDHA and paid for via CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Funds.

The Site

In 2011, [The Nashville Civic Design Center](#), a local urban design collective, launched the Design Your Neighborhood project. The four-week internship program offered inner city youth the opportunity to explore how architecture, urban design and planning, graphic design and filmmaking can make positive changes within communities. The young participants explored issues related to design with highly trained professionals and city leaders such as landscape architect, Kira Appelhans of Hawkins Partners, Inc. Landscape Architects. With the guidance Appelhans, youth from the neighborhood surrounding Edmondson Park redesigned the underutilized park land located between Charlotte Pike and the John Henry Hale Public Housing complex. Participants discussed what elements should be included in the new park design to make it a desirable space for young people and other community members to spend their time. Participants in the program also felt it was important to included a way to pay homage to the park's namesake, William Edmondson. Born to freed slaves, Edmondson was a self-taught artist born and raised in Nashville, TN and the first African-American artist to have a solo exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1937. In January of 2012 the Nashville Civic Design Center debuted a [documentary film](#) chronicling the project.

The Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) contracted with Hawkins Partners to restore Edmondson Park, incorporating design ideas developed during the Design Your Neighborhood project. Two youth from the Oasis Center were hired to assist Hawkins Partners in gathering additional community input for the park's redesign. The final master plan includes site specific works by Thornton Dial and Lonnie Holley and the relocation of a pre-existing artwork created by local artist, Sherri Warner-Hunter and donated by the Oasis Center.

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

EDMONDSON PARK



Project Partners

Ayers Institute for Teacher Leadership & Innovation at Lipscomb University

The Ayers Institute has partnering with Metro Arts to create the Metro Arts Teacher Cadre. The cadre will result in a series of interdisciplinary Common-Core lesson plan units highlighting how to use public art to teach math, science, history and ELA. Newly created units were showcased during a professional development Training on June 3, 2014. You may view the units by visiting www.lipscomb.edu/ayers/metroarts.

<http://www.lipscomb.edu/ayers>

Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and Museum of Art

Cheekwood owns the largest existing collection of Edmondson's work. They plan to hold an exhibition of Edmondson's work alongside Dial's and Holley's during the fall of 2014. The exhibit will include a major teacher/student outreach effort.

<http://www.cheekwood.org/>

Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA)

MDHA is the owner and developer of the park property.

<http://www.nashville-mdha.org/>

Oasis Center

Located on the edge of Edmondson Park, was founded in 1969 to provide community-based care for youth experiencing alcohol and drug problems. Oasis Center has evolved over the past four decades into one of the nation's leading youth-serving organizations, offering safety and support to Nashville's most vulnerable and disconnected youth, while seeking to also teach young people how to transform the conditions that create problems for them in the first place. In March 2014 Metro Arts and the Oasis Center partners to bring Lonnie Holley to Nashville for a week-long [artist residency](#). During the residency, Holley worked closely with students from the Oasis Center who learn to use art as a positive and safe form of self-expression through various programs at the center.

<https://www.oasiscenter.org/>

The Inspiration: William Edmondson

William Edmondson (1874-1951), the son of freed slaves, was born in rural Davidson County and moved to Nashville by 1890. Working first at the railroad and then as a janitor at the Nashville Woman's Hospital, he lived at 1434 Fourteenth Avenue South surrounded by family and a vibrant community. At the age of 57, Edmondson began working with limestone using a hammer and a railroad spike. He explained, "I was out in the driveway with some old pieces of stone when I heard a voice telling me to pick up my tools and start to work on a tombstone. I looked up in the sky and right there in the noon day light He hung a tombstone out for me to make."

Edmondson carved for 17 years. He said, "I am just doing the Lord's work. I ain't got much style; God don't want much style, but He gives wisdom and sends you along." Truly Edmondson drew his subjects from his world, both real and imagined. Critters like rabbits and bears, from folktales, Adam and Eve from the Bible, and nurses from the Woman's Hospital joined neighbors on porch swings and preachers with Bibles in a cast of characters that inhabited his yard. Crafted by a skilled hand, Edmondson's sculptures are a testament to one man's ability to transform observation and imagination into objects that continue to inspire us today.

William Edmondson stands among the most important self-taught artists of the past century. As the first African-American to receive a solo exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art (1937), Edmondson claims a national place in the history of American Art. (Source: *Cheekwood Museum of Art*).

The Artists

Thornton Dial was born in 1928 in Bessemer, Alabama, where he still lives today. He worked as an industrial worker until 1981. Dial was “discovered” in 1987 by friend Lonnie Holley and art collector William Arnett. His works are largely found objects, both two dimensional and three-dimensional. Dial continues to create work with the help of his son and artist, Richard Dial. He is one of the most notable self-taught artists of the last century, exhibiting work in major museums cross the United States. Highly collected, Dial’s work is featured in numerous public and private collections such as The Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art. In 2012, a major exhibition titled *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial* traveled to major museums across the southeast including the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, TN.

Lonnie Holley is a self-taught artist who was born in 1950 in Birmingham, Alabama. He was inspired to pursue art after carving tombstones for his sister’s two children who were tragically killed in a house fire. Like Edmondson, Holley believes that his work and materials are divinely inspired. Working primarily in carved sandstone and found object assemblages, Holley’s sculptures have been displayed in institutions such as The Smithsonian American Art Museum, The American Folk Art Museum, The High Museum of Art, and the White House. In 2012 Holley released his first full-length album titled, “Keeping a Record of It” to much critical acclaim.

As part of the Edmondson Park project, Holley participated in an [artist residency](#) at the Oasis Center. During the residency Holley led two artist workshops for youth served by the Oasis Center, met with community members during an Open House at the Oasis Center and a led a third artist workshop for members of the Metro Arts Teacher Cadre.

Sherri Warner-Hunter is a local artist and creator of “The Gathering”, a mosaic sculpture previously owned by the Oasis Center. “The Gathering” was donated to the Metro Nashville Arts Commission by the Oasis Center in 2013 and will be relocated to Edmondson Park.

Project Timeline

November—December 2013

- Contract Execution

Artists must register as vendors, review the contract and submit any changes before signing and returning the documents to Metro Arts.

December 2013—March 2014

- Design development
- Engineered drawings

If there were any changes to the site which effect the design, the artists must make the necessary changes to ensure the safety and feasibility of the artwork. The artist must also submit structural drawings detailing the physical features of the artwork. These structural drawings must be approved and stamped by a licensed engineer.

March— June 2014

- Fabricate artwork

March (24th- 31st) 2014

- Artist in Residency (AIR)
- Community Workshops
- Media Appointments

Lonnie Holley will lead a series of art making activities and workshops March 24th-31st.

Holley will be working with a dedicated group of young people at the Oasis Center, through a series of workshops designed specifically for the occasion. Holley will also host an art making activity for the communities neighboring Edmondson Park and conduct interviews with local media during this time.

June 2014*

- Installation

July 2014*

- Dedication

**Dates are tentative until further notice.*

Artist Residency & Workshop Schedule

Monday, March 24th	Travel Day/Lonnie Arrives in Nashville
Tuesday, March 25th	(AIR) Workshop #1 R.E.A.L. (Reaching Excellence As Leaders) Program 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Wednesday, March 26th	(AIR) Workshop # 2 The Bike Workshop at Oasis 10 a.m.— 2p.m.
Thursday, March 27th	(AIR) Workshop #3 Interview with Nashville Arts Magazine 3 p.m. “Meet the Artist” Community Event Open House 5 p.m. – 6-6: 30 p.m. Art Making Activity (all ages) 6-6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Friday, March 28th	Media Day: Metro 3 Interviews, Filming etc. Interview with Nashville Scene 8 a.m. Filming at Tennessee State Museum 11 a.m.
Saturday, March 29th	Knoxville (No Events)
Sunday, March 30th	Knoxville (No Events)
Monday, March 31st	Metro Arts Teacher Cadre Q&A session with cadre 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Dinner 5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Art-making activity 6:00p.m.- 8: 00 p.m.

Workshop Descriptions & Objectives

Workshop #1: R.E.A.L. Program

Tuesday, March 25th

8-12 High school students currently enrolled in, or recently graduating from the R.E.A.L. program will attend a lecture and workshop lead by Lonnie Holley. Students will learn to repurpose found materials and collaborate creatively through positive art-making activities.

Students will have an opportunity to display their artwork during one of several exhibitions featuring Holley's artwork summer/fall 2014. Potential exhibition spaces include: The Arts Company, Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and Museum of Art, the Metro Nashville Arts Commission and the Oasis Center.

Workshop #2: The Bike Workshop at Oasis

Wednesday, March 26th

8-12 Junior High students (ages 11-13) will be selected by Oasis staff to participate in the workshop held at the Bike Workshop at Oasis. The workshop will include a collective art-making activity utilizing found objects and bike parts. Holley will discuss how and why he uses salvaged and recycled material in his own artwork and the importance of environmental conservation.

Students will have an opportunity to display their artwork during one of several exhibitions featuring Holley's artwork summer/fall 2014. Potential exhibition spaces include: The Arts Company, Blend Gallery, Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and Museum of Art, the Metro Nashville Arts Commission and the Oasis Center.

Workshop #3: Oasis Center Open House & "Meet the Artist" Event

Thursday, March 27th

This community engagement event will allow members of the John Henry Hale community to meet Lonnie Holley, tour the art & bike workshop spaces at the Oasis Center and join in an all-ages art making activity. Tours of the Oasis Center facilities and light snacks and refreshments will be available during the "open-house" portion of the evening. The final hour and a half of the event will be reserved for an art-making activity lead by Holley.

Workshop #4: Teacher Cadre

Monday, March 31st

Teachers participating in the project externship will attend a workshop conducted by Lonnie Holley. The workshop will focus on a simple art-making activity that can easily be recreated and executed in a classroom setting. Teachers will have the opportunity to discuss the project and the connection between public art and local communities with Holley and Metro Arts.

Media Coverage

<http://nashvillearts.com/2014/05/02/lonnie-holley/>

<http://www.nashvillescene.com/countrylife/archives/2014/05/05/art-of-the-day-holy-garbage-can-by-lonnie-holley-at-cash-rojas-projects-in-atlanta>

<http://www.nashvillescene.com/countrylife/archives/2014/03/27/tonight-lonnie-holley-artist-talk-at-oasis-center>

<http://www.myaic.com/news/entertainment/from-worms-to-the-whitney-inside-lonnie-holleys-im/nfNLC/>

<http://nashvillearts.com/2014/01/19/state-arts-william-edmondson/>

[http://www.al.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2013/12/works by renowned birmingham a.html](http://www.al.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2013/12/works_by_renowned_birmingham_a.html)